

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the Abstract as follows:

An ~~improved~~ automatically updated timestamp for database systems is disclosed. The automatically updated timestamp can be provided in a hidden timestamp column for a table, where the value of the timestamp column can be retrieved with a query that calls the column by name. Optionally, the timestamp column can be provided for each table in the database system to ensure its availability to applications. For cases where a timestamp for each row in a table is not desired, an automatically updated timestamp can be provided for a data page. This timestamp can be retrieved from an update timestamp recorded on disk and in the buffer pool or from a log relative byte address. Although this is a page-level timestamp, its use may be desirable for infrequently updated tables or where space on the disk and buffer pool is at a premium.